

The article by Jackson, Drummond, and Camara (2007), discussed three major differences between qualitative and quantitative research, while focusing on defining qualitative research:

- The distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry
- The distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher
- The distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed

As a qualitative researcher, you are focused on the “human as an instrument” approach to collecting data for your research. This approach focuses on understanding human beings’ experiences and reflections about their experiences. In qualitative research, the participants offer more detail and in-depth responses around how they understood or interpreted their experiences. The participant provides more detail and information to what they are being asked specifically around the research topic. The drawback with this research approach is that the results will not be general to a population because there are not many people who will volunteer to be participants in studies that would ask you to offer up so much detail. This research is subjective, and many are skeptical of the trustworthiness of the information gathered. Since it’s subjective information, much of the data collected is then interpreted by the researcher based on their own experiences. Good qualitative research applies standards such as member-checking, stepwise replication, and audit trails. These standards verify the validity of what the participants reported so it’s not interpreted based on the researcher’s own belief system. Member-checking assists in validating qualitative research findings, as themes and descriptions are taken back to participants to determine whether or not participants feel they are accurate. Peer briefing and external audits assist with credibility of the study as it assesses whether the findings resonate with those not connected to the research. Most importantly, all qualitative studies should be approached with objectivity, ethical diligence and rigor to be considered valid and trustworthy.

After reviewing this article, I feel that it is much easier to perform a quantitative research study than a qualitative research study. For the most part, quantitative research studies are going to give you “black and white” answers to your questions, along with results that are consistent in how they are answered. For example, if you have the demographics on the population and observe the participants in a quantitative study, most of the variables and measurements are controlled and consistent. The data you receive back is “black and white” around demographics, numbers, and what you are measuring. When you perform a qualitative study, you are getting back data that has to be interpreted, and is subject to human-error. It is imperative that the researcher is ethical and puts some standards and rigor around interpretation of the data. I would think this type of research would take a lot longer to collect and validate as well. However, if you wanted to dig deeper and get more insight and feelings on a subject based on specific experiences, qualitative is the way to go.

Reference:

Jackson, R. L., Drummond, D. K., & Camara, S. (2007). What is qualitative research? *Qualitative Research Reports In Communication*, 8(1), 21-28. doi:10.1080/17459430701617879